

**MINUTES  
OF THE  
STATE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
BOARD MEETING  
1:00 P.M., Thursday, May 1, 2003  
Arizona Department of Transportation  
AUDITORIUM  
206 South 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Phoenix, Arizona 85007**

The State Transportation Board met in official session for a special meeting at 1:00 p.m., Thursday, May 1, 2003, with Chairperson Radicke presiding. Other Board members present included: Vice Chairperson Bill Jeffers, Rusty Gant, Dick Hileman, Joe Lane, Jim Martin and Si Schorr. Also present were Director Victor Mendez; Debra Brisk, Deputy Director; Bill Higgins, Acting State Engineer; John McGee, Chief Financial Officer, Administrative Services Division; and Dale Buskirk, Acting Director, Planning Division. There were approximately 120 people in the audience.

**OPENING REMARKS AND PLEDGE**

Chairperson Radicke led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Proposal To Change Name Of Squaw Peak Parkway To Piestewa Freeway**

Mr. Mendez, presented a proposal to the Board to change the name of the Squaw Peak Parkway to the Lori Piestewa Freeway. He stated there are three primary reasons why it is important to change the name of the freeway. First, to honor the late Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Lori Piestewa who served her state and nation honorably and became the first Native American Woman serving in the United States Military to be killed as a result of combat. He said Lori Piestewa made the ultimate sacrifice for her country and it is appropriate to honor her bravery and sacrifice. Second, to address the controversy that has lingered for many years over the word "Squaw" which is considered derogatory by many Native Americans. He explained the change would replace the current name with something that honors and promotes a positive message for all Arizonan's, particularly Native American women. He noted approximately 21 Native American communities have submitted a letter to the Department and Governor Napalitano, supporting a change in the freeway's name. He said to ignore this message would be to send a message to all citizens that intentionally offending some people is acceptable. Finally, the Arizona State Board on Geographic and Historic Names recently agreed to rename S.R. 51 as the Piestewa Freeway and renamed Squaw Peak as Piestewa Peak. It would be particularly appropriate to rename the freeway to correspond with these new names.

Mr. Mendez stated a number of citizens have expressed concern that the state is acting in haste and suggested it adhere to the five year waiting period. He clarified the five year waiting period does not apply to the State Transportation Board, noting, until 1987 it was the practice of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names to wait one year. He said it was not until 1995 that the U.S. Board adopted the current five year policy. He expressed his opinion this is the right time and urged the Board to rename S.R. 51 to the Lori Piestewa Freeway.

### **CALL TO THE AUDIENCE**

Representative Phil Hanson, District 9, said the freeway has always been known as the Squaw Peak and, regardless of what the Board on Geographic Historic Names says or what the Transportation Board does, most will continue to know it as the Squaw Peak. He stated he attended the meeting of the Board of Geographic and Historic Names, reporting the Board broke rules and pressure was placed on the Board by the Governor and her staff. He noted the only member of the Board to vote against the name change was also the only non-state employee. He said his opposition to the name change in no way takes away from the memory and bravery of Lori Piestewa, agreeing she deserves recognition. He said, however, the state has to follow the rules set by boards and federal agencies when naming freeways.

Martha McNamara, former member of the Board of Geographic and Historical Names, said during her tenure on the Board, they dealt with renaming of the Beeline Highway after a policeman. She said she stood by the Governor's position to rename the highway and was ultimately asked for her resignation, which she tendered. She expressed her opinion the Squaw Peak Freeway should also be renamed to Piestewa Freeway.

Wayne Taylor, Chairman, The Hopi Tribe, stated Lori Piestewa was killed in combat in March 2003 while defending herself, her fellow soldiers and her nation. He said the proposal to rename the parkway is welcomed by the Hopi people. He stated it would be appropriate that Lori Piestewa's name serve as a reminder, both of her sacrifice, as well as the sacrifices of men and women who have served in the past and continue to serve today. He stated there is nothing uplifting or inspiring in the parkway's current name and Native American women, as well as women in general, will benefit from the Board's action to replace the negative connotations now associated with the parkway's name with a name that reminds us of the dignity, courage and valor that characterizes Lori Piestewa and countless women across the nation who serve in our Armed Forces. On behalf of the Hopi Tribe, he urged the Board to approve the proposal.

Santos Vega, Lulac Council 284 and 1063, pointed out the Hopi people have lived in this area for thousands of years. He said it is time that the state recognize Native Americans and integrate them within the state. He said his service during the Korean War pales in comparison to the sacrifice Private Piestewa made during the War in Iraq. He expressed his opinion the State has been given an opportunity to replace an offensive name with one that stands for honor and courage.

Lloyd Clark, member of the Arizona State Board of Geographic and Historic Names, pointed out his was the descending vote on changing the freeway's name. He said, while Lori Piestewa deserves recognition for her military service, the proposed name change is inappropriate and is surrounded by as much controversy as the current name. He submitted an alternative proposal, suggesting Redmont Peak would be a more appropriate place for a memorial to Private Piestewa. He explained the five year waiting period policy allows the Board time to do research and for thoughtful deliberations to be done. He noted at least 28 other geographic names in Arizona contain the word 'squaw', questioning whether these too would be renamed. He asked the Board to defer making their decision, stating sanctioning the change would add insult to injury.

Bill Leimkuehler, USAF Retired, expressed his opinion it would be better for the state to select a beautiful rock formation or unnamed peak along I-40 as the site for a memorial to heroic Indian women, specifically Lori Piestewa. He explained a rest stop at that location could include a display of pictures and narrative of Private Piestewa's bravery. He noted the word squaw refers to an Indian woman and is not an insult.

William "Blue" Crowley, citizen, stated, as of 2000, Webster's dictionary acknowledges negative connotations associated with the word squaw. He expressed his opinion the peak and parkway should be renamed to honor Lori Piestewa.

Colleen Robin, resident of Glendale, suggested, since the peak has been renamed in honor of Lori Piestewa, that the parkway be named after Lance Corporal Michael J. Williams in recognition of his bravery and sacrifice. She said recognizing one soldier, and not the other, would be a travesty.

Cheryl Hunter, Phoenix resident, said in her discussions with members of the Indian community, they expressed concern that the Tribes were not consulted with regard to the proposed name change and that it might be too early to make such a memorial, given that many Indian and non-Indian soldiers have yet to return from Iraq.

**Board Action:** A motion to go into Executive Session was made by Mr. Jeffers, seconded by Mr. Lane and passed unanimously.

The special meeting reconvened at 2:30 p.m.

**Board Action:** A motion to table the renaming of S.R. 51 was made by Mr. Jeffers. The motion failed due to lack of a second.

**Board Action:** Mr. Schorr made a motion to rename SR 51 to Piestewa Freeway, stating; 1) the policies and procedures of the US Board of Geographic and Historic Names prohibits the use of a word in official geographic language considered to be derogatory. The word squaw, as now described in many dictionaries, is offensive. The proposed name change would rectify the situation in two ways, it would delete the offending term and replace it with a name that has become a symbol of the bravery of Native American women. This would not only provide tribute to PFC Piestewa's sacrifice,

but also remove the longstanding racial and gender slight found in the current name. While it is currently a very contentious issue, hopefully within a few years people will see that it was something that should have been done long ago; and 2) we have followed all of the rules, except in terms of the five year rule which is not applicable in this case. Mr. Gant seconded motion.

Mr. Jeffers said, while he and likely everyone in the room respect the sacrifices made by members of the military, his concern is that the Board is making a decision in haste. He said the Board, in making a decision today, would not be demonstrating the weight of its responsibility. He stated the bylaws of the Board of Geographic and Historic Names suggests a five year waiting period to allow emotions of the minute to subside and to ensure the right decision is made.

Mr. Martin agreed with Mr. Jeffers, adding he is also concerned that the Board has not had formal correspondence from the Board of Geographic and Historic Names confirming their recommendation.

Mr. Schorr stated, while the lack of correspondence from the Board of Geographic and Historic Names is unsettling, it is clear from their minutes that they did not believe they had jurisdiction and deferred the matter to the State Transportation Board. He agreed the Board has to act deliberately when considering matters of safety and those that effect the transportation system as a whole, stating, however, this is not an issue that requires a lot of time. He reiterated the basis for his motion is that it would replace the currently offensive name with one that honors Lori Piestewa.

Mr. Jeffers acknowledged that the term squaw is offensive to some, stating, however, the reality is that people who live in the area do not have any problem with the name. He stated the Board is acting on a recommendation made by the Board of Geographic and Historic Names, however he has concerns about how their meeting was handled. He reiterated his position that a decision should be postponed until a later date.

Mr. Martin referred to the Board's policy 17, stating it asks for a blessing from the Board of Geographic and Historic Names before any name change occurs. He expressed his opinion that their blessing has not yet been received.

The motion passed by a vote of 5 to 2 (Mr. Jeffers and Mr. Martin voted nay).

**ADJOURN**

**Board Action:** A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Jeffers, seconded by Mr. Hileman and passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

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Ingo Radicke, Chairperson  
State Transportation Board

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Victor Mendez, Director

\*Denotes items approved in the consent agenda.